1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

cŏlŏlŏ, they will say, They have bewitched him with *oloseta*.[1] In going to the diviner they take a cock for the cure. They kill their cock, the diviner eats it, they (go) to the threshing-floor for the cure. That threshing-floor is holy and no one may pass over it unless in passing he spits out a little saliva and says, There may it stay, there. Only so may they pass on, even though they may be many, each person does just that.' The 'many' who go to the diviner are representatives of the family, for their presence is necessary not only for proper diagnosis but also to show their concern and good faith.

Babyhood Proper

(From the second week until about the seventh month)

The period of lying-in is terminated when the cord falls and the navel heals, but the second period only begins when the baby turns dark. This period begins with 'Breaking the pot' (*Oku ipaya ombia*). The reference is to the gourd or pot in which the beer and medicine have been kept. 'Breaking the pot', says one informant, 'means dividing the dark from the light.'

'When a child is first born he is perfectly pink and it is not possible to say whether he will be light or dark. When six or eight days have passed he begins to change and to get the skin with which he will grow. At that time they recognize whether the child will be light or dark. Then is the time when those who do not like to hold a pink baby will begin to take him up, for also it is then that his neck begins to be strong. Then too the baby begins to cause people to laugh. Should he be a boy, those who take him will say, Ah my husband are you well? Ha, how is the man? Then the parent will rejoice and say, Shucks, this man doesn't give any cloth at all. Should she be a girl, they will also say, How is my girl? The parent replies, She is quite well. The man then says, Where is a beer-jug for a man? The parent says, Shucks, your girl can't brew at all, she's no good, they've just put her out of her house; they've just divorced her because she can't keep house properly.'

This period from about the eighth day until about the end of the sixth month is the period of babyhood proper. At night the baby sleeps with his mother and by day he is carried in a cloth on her back (*oku velekua*). When it is not raining his head may be seen

[1] *Oloseta* (plural) are a wild fruit, hard and about the size of hazel-nuts, used for playing *ecela*.

1: Childs M-S (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

thoroughly drilled in fear of the stranger that he can rarely act naturally in the presence of one.

Physical development. From the time that the child is weaned his physical development proceeds more slowly on the whole than is the case with the children of European peoples. This slow development continues to be noticeable through childhood and adolescence. In early childhood there also seems to take place an increase in the rate of mortality. These facts may be due, at least in part, to specific deficiencies of diet. As has been noted, the customary diet of the Ovimbundu is lacking in fats, in calcium, and in certain vitamins, elements which are very necessary for the growing child, and which, before weaning, the mother's milk had supplied. The difference in physical well-being as between babies and children after weaning is marked among the Ovimbundu.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1940 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

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CHAPTER VII

ADOLESCENCE

From Puberty until Marriage

The Youth (*Ukuenje* or ~~*umalihe*~~); The Girl (*Ufeko*)

THE onset of puberty is generally late among the Ovimbundu both for boys and for girls.[1] The number of individuals who have exact records of their birth is not yet large, and for other reasons it is difficult to collect a large mass of exact data on this subject. From exact data in a few cases, biographical and genealogical data in more, and observation of a great many, I have concluded that, in general, puberty comes for girls at about fourteen to sixteen and for boys at about fifteen to seventeen. I have the impression that this may be due to faulty diet and other poor conditions of living. A careful study of this problem might yield interesting and significant results.

Soon after puberty young people generally stop sleeping in the parents' house. The girls congregate in kitchens and each boy builds himself a house. 'When he builds he does not wait for anyone to act as his teacher at all: he just goes ahead. A boy's father will show him saying, Begin there your house; stand a pole here, another there, and in the ground between, run a trench straight through. Then he will begin to cut poles and after that to build (the house) and thatch it. On the day of plastering it, they will show him how to mix the mud and throw it on, right up to the eaves.'[2] This is the boy's own house in which he will live through adolescence and young manhood, and to which he will bring his bride.

Before his marriage can take place, there must be a great deal of preparation, most of which must be undertaken by the young man himself, just as he has himself built the house. Umbundu adolescent development involves growth and progress on those lines already begun in childhood, but it takes on a conscious urge and direction, for it is now preparation for the responsibilities of adult life,

[1] This is in contradiction to the opinion given by Magyar (op. cit., p. 283). Might it be that dietary and other conditions of life have changed enough in eighty years to produce this result? I think it more likely that Magyar's observations were faulty.

[2] R. Kavita Evambi: manuscript cited.

862 "The practice of leaving the crièche in the village by day makes his elder sibling[1] responsible for much of his education....She herself may not be more than six or seven years old and consequently cannot be expected to 'educate' her charge very thoroughly. She interests herself in his walking and talking and he will initate her in many things."[2]

863 General instruction in cleanliness begins at this age, although sphincter control may have begun much earlier, since the mother feels every movement made by the baby on her back.

● 145 After weaning the physical development of the child proceeds more slowly than that of European peoples, and Childs believes that this may be due to deficiencies in diet.[3]

CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

857 From the time a child is able to walk until he is about nine years
861 old he continues seeing the same people as before, but he becomes less dependent upon the elder sister or cousin who helped him, and begins his life-long association with his age-mates. The sex-division of society starts for him at this stage: from about eight years boys begin to eat in the *onjango* with their fathers, girls continuing in the kitchen with their mothers. *After about eight years the father becomes largely responsible* for the education of boys, the mother for that of girls. During this period the child's education may be summarised under three heads:

869 (a) *Psychological*, chiefly fear of real or imaginary dangers. This is imparted by mother, elder siblings, and perhaps by a grandmother; there is a tendency for the teaching of fear to be done by women.[4]

867 (b) *Social*, chiefly usages of etiquette and acquaintance with the kinship structure and its requirements. A child of about eight is supposed to know his social status and all the etiquette that pertains to it. In the *onjango* the hierarchy of age is observed, honoured guests and old men being served first, and so on all down the line. With the decline of the *onjango*, there has been a great decline in the teaching of etiquette and social usage, and this naturally affects boys rather than girls.

864 Little direct sex teaching is attempted, and adults are reticent in speaking of sexual matters in the presence of children. But since children live with their parents in one-roomed houses, it is inevitable that children should sometimes observe intercourse.

868 (c) *Training in skills*: Children are taught few definite skills before the age of eight or nine, but many of their games are in imitation of adult activities.

864 From the age of six or seven years children are usually sent to spend
857 one or two years with the mother's brother. They may also be sent to the father's sister or brother for a period, and, in the case of girls, to the mother's mother. Formerly prominent families sent their children for a

(1) Either a brother or sister may act as nurse.
(2) Childs, *op.cit.*, p.95. (3) Ibid., p.97.
(4) Childs actually writes " 'the side of the basket' " (p.100), but seems to be referring simply to female relatives.